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INFO RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA

RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1741

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC

RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000495

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR CA/OCS/EAP

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STATE FOR EAP/MTS FOR DBISCHOF

STATE FOR OES/AIAG FOR AMBASSADOR LOFTIS, DWINN AND

CPATTERSON

STATE FOR REO/BKK FOR HHOWARD

STATE FOR OES/IHB, AAIT, MED

HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER AND HICKEY

CDC ATLANTA FOR CCID AND COGH

USDA FOR APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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PINR, AMGT, TF, MY

SUBJECT: MALAYSIA H1N1 UPDATE - June 18, 2009

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Ministry of Health (MOH) confirmed the first case of local transmission of H1N1 in Malaysia, a 17 year old girl who had not traveled abroad but did have contact with Malaysia's 12th confirmed case who was infected outside of Malaysia. Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin chaired an inter-ministerial meeting on June 18 which was convened in response to this development. The committee formally mandated health declaration questionnaires for all visitors and returning Malaysians but did not adopt any stricter measures like social distancing or on-board screening of passengers prior to disembarkation. Prime Minister Najib ruled out a travel ban or school closures at this point, but did ask Malaysians to avoid travel to "high risk" countries without specifically naming any locations. END SUMMARY.

Local Transmission

¶2. (U) MOH confirmed Malaysia's 23rd case of H1N1 on June 17. Unlike the previous 22 cases, this individual had no history of travel to infected countries. She did, however, have contact with Malaysia's 12th confirmed case, a Malaysian medical student in Australia. MOH had previously identified local transmission as a tripwire for increasing their response, with MOH Director-General Ismail Merican warning on June 15 that social distancing measures like school closures would become necessary. MOH is currently holding off on such steps while the severity of the transmission is evaluated. Friends, family, and other close contacts of the 23rd case have been placed in quarantine. None of these individuals have H1N1 symptoms at this time.

Confirmed Cases

¶3. (U) MOH confirmed four other cases on June 17. The 19th and 20th cases are a 23 year old local student who had recently traveled to Australia and another passenger on the same return flight: AirAsia X flight D7 2723 arriving at Kuala Lumpur's Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) on June 14. The 21st case is a Malaysian returning from

studying in Australia for holidays on Malaysia Airlines flight MH128 arriving at KLIA on June 16. The 22nd confirmed case is a 54 year old who had returned from Manila on board Malaysia Airlines flight MH 705 arriving at KLIA on June 12. As with previous cases, all passengers on board these flights have been asked to self-quarantine. In light of the local transmission, MOH has publicly reiterated its legal authority to impose quarantine under the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Act 1988 and the International Health Regulation 2005.

Local Response

¶4. (U) The National Inter-Ministerial Influenza Pandemic Committee met on June 18 chaired by Deputy PM Muhyiddin. The committee decided to formally mandate a health screening questionnaire for all visitors and returning Malaysians; these had previously been voluntary. Failure to complete and submit a questionnaire could result in a fine of RM10,000 or 2 years in jail once the law is passed next week.

¶5. (U) MOH had previously proposed screening passengers onboard flights prior to their disembarkation, but this has not yet been approved or implemented. MOH had also proposed screening at exit points and not just upon entry to Malaysia. However, the ministers have decided to hold off on implementing these or other more drastic steps until the situation warrants such action. Prime Minister Najib has already ruled out a travel ban or school closures at this stage. Najib asked Malaysians to avoid travel to "high risk" countries without specifically naming any locations.

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¶6. (U) Some Embassy visitors from the U.S. have reported that several local companies are requiring visitors from the U.S. and other affected countries to undergo 72 hours in country with no H1N1 symptoms before they will grant a meeting. This is not a MOH policy but rather done at the discretion of the company. It is not clear how widespread this type of policy is at this point but at least three large companies including local AmBank have instituted such a measure.

RAPSON